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# MESMERISM.

## A LETTER TO MISS MARTINEAU,

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. MARTIEN.

1847.

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# MESMERISM.

MADAM,

It was not my intention to break in upon the series of your published communications on the subject of Mesmerism; but having now seen your third letter in the "Athenæum," I cannot longer delay addressing you. You are my countrywoman; we are natives of the same town; and though personally unknown, we must ere long appear at the same tribunal, to render up our respective accounts of talents committed to our trust. Deeply impressed with this, I forego my previous purpose of offering a few comments to the public generally, and address myself to you. May the all-seeing God be present with my spirit while I write, and with yours, and those of all others, while they read what I feel constrained to say!

Into the nature of Mesmerism, as practised and recommended by you, I shall no otherwise enter than as an unlearned person. With its supposed medicinal effects, described in your first letter, I shall not now interfere. If it be what I firmly believe it to be, this is indeed but a small matter—a mere bait to lure the unwary into a deeper snare. My business is not with what you state to have been your own experience of its efficacious powers in soothing pain and overcoming obstinate diseases; but with the supernatural manifestations in the case of another individual, which forms the subject of your second and third papers. I say super-

natural, because you are so placed as to constrain me to come to one of the following conclusions, in the affair of the person whom you call "J." either,

I. You are guilty of wilful falsehood; or,

II. You are the victim of a cunning deception practised by others; or,

III. The effects produced are beyond the scope of any existing agencies in nature, unless operated upon by some power altogether superhuman.

The first of these suppositions you will indignantly disavow; and I also acquit you of it.

The second you will be scarcely less eager to reject; and I freely admit that your statements do not warrant such a conclusion. You have known the individual for years; you are acquainted with the amount of her intellect, and the extent of her acquirements; and are, therefore, a competent judge of her capacity for enacting such a part as, under this supposition, she must continually sustain. I do not disbelieve any part of your narrative, therefore I am reduced to the necessity of regarding the affair as one of a supernatural complexion.

And, if supernatural, it is most assuredly diabolical.

This, of course, you do not admit: you profess yourself wholly unable to offer any explanation of what is daily occurring in your own experience, and under your careful observation. You say, "I hope we shall have wisdom and self-command henceforth to prescribe nothing to a power so obscure, and at present beyond our dictation. We can summon and dismiss it, and may therefore contemplate it without fear. But we have no power over the nature of its manifestations." All your remarks have the same inconsistent tendency. You testify to the presence of some mysterious influence, originating, as you believe, in your own will, or that of other persons; obeying a summons, the nature of which seems to consist in an earnest desire for the presence of that power, an acquiescence in its actings, and an unqualified submission to its behests. You believe that you can dismiss it also at will; yet it is easy to prove, on your

own showing, that the invoked influence is not always so passive under your hands; that it does not invariably go at your bidding; and in the same breath in which you boast of this command over your invisible attendant, you deprecate the assumption of authority to prescribe to a power so obscure and beyond mortal dictation. That it is the policy of this agent to yield a general obedience, no less to your mandate of dismissal than to your summoning will, I can well believe. May God in his infinite mercy open your eyes to the tremendous character of the "power" to whom you feel that you cannot authoritatively prescribe, but with which you are so dangerously tampering!

You are, of course, a believer in Divine revelation; you receive the Bible as the Word of God, and are content to bow to its inspired enunciations? I put this interrogatively, because I know not enough of you to assert it positively. If you have been ensnared by infidel principles, then, alas! you are led captive by Satan at his will, and he can use you in whatsoever way he shall choose for the furtherance of his dark designs; but if, with me, you hold that the Word of God is the one sure and certain test; that it is at all times, and in all cases, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;"* if you believe that "to the law and to the testimony" all disputed points, touching spiritual things, should be brought, and admit that, "if they speak not according to this Word, there is no light in them;"† then we have a common and a firm ground on which to stand, and I can with confidence invite you to investigate the matter by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

There exists a wide-spread practical disbelief in the existence, or, at least in the vast power and active agency, of Satan: and even among those who do not question his being or designs, there is a too general rejection of Scripture testimony, as applicable to our times, of the devices by which he can extend his influence over man. The very mention of unlawful arts, practised by means of infernal aid, now excites a smile, even on the countenances of those who are taught constantly to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one."

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Isa. viii. 20.

Accordingly, when Mesmerism is stigmatized as a branch of sorcery, we are met with an exclamation, "How can you be so weak as to believe in witchcraft?" I confess myself so weak, I glory in being so weak, as to believe in every word that the Lord God hath spoken. I believe and am sure that Pharaoh's magicians did, by the power of the devil, imitate the miracles wrought by the hands of Moses and Aaron, up to a point at which the Lord arrested them.* I believe that when the Israelites were divinely commanded—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,"† witchcraft existed, and was within the reach of those to whom the command was given. I believe that the woman at Endor, to whom Saul in his extremity had recourse, maintained unlawful commerce with evil spirits, and by their help did many marvellous things.‡ I believe that when Simon Magus is said to have bewitched the people with his sorceries, he really did what the Scripture declares him to have done.§ I believe, because the Bible says it, that the damsel who followed Paul and Silas, with an artful testimony to the truth of their doctrine, was possessed with a spirit of divination; which spirit being cast out, the gains of her masters were gone.‖ I believe that when the Apostle wrote his enumeration of the works of the flesh,¶ including therein "witchcraft," he wrote it for us, for you and for me, as much as for the churches in Galatia. And finally, I believe, and I pray God to imprint the truth on your heart also, that without the gate of the heavenly city, excluded for ever from the presence of God, are "sorcerers," together with "whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."** This is an awful sentence. Those who falsely pretend to the exercise of supernatural powers, are condemned, together with their actual possessors.

Thus compelled to believe, not as a matter of opinion, but of faith, that the crime of sorcery is within the reach of man's daring wickedness, and that Satan, when it suits his policy, will labour to entrap us into it, as readily as into any other form of rebellion against God, I proceed to notice some

* Exodus viii. 18. † Exodus xxii. 18. Deut. xviii. 10—12.
‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 9. § Acts viii. 9.
‖ Acts xvi. 16—19. ¶ Gal. v. 20. ** Rev. xxii. 15.

of the most prominent characteristics of this devilish device, as developed in the case that you are bringing before the public. But I must first state a fact that cannot be too generally known; one that I shudder to record; for it amounts to the one unpardonable sin that cannot be blotted out—blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.*

A book on Mesmerism, published in French, and written by a Frenchman, contains this fearful assertion: after stating that Mesmerism prevailed among the ancient Egyptians, the wretched writer proceeds to remind his readers that Jesus was in Egypt; and then asserts, that there he learned the magic art by which he effected the miraculous cures recorded in the Gospels! The magic arts practised in Egypt of old were those which the God of heaven denounced as involving in the penalty of death every Israelite who should participate in them. They were positively declared to be of the devil; and as such they are described, and the people of God warned against them as damnable, even to the last page, almost the last sentence, of the word of God. By this Satanic power, by the power of Beelzebub, your Mesmerist asserts that Jesus cast out devils, and performed his wonderful works; and do you not shrink from identifying yourself, from connecting yourself in any way, with a system that treads so near upon the awful verge of "*Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*?" O! can you dare to lead the steps of the unwary to such a gulf as this? Will you assist to bring upon the souls of our unbelieving multitudes in these days, who might but too readily catch at the horrible suggestion, the condemnation that fell upon some, who of old spake words like these? Surely you cannot know the depths of Satan to which you are now enticed. Pause, ere it be too late. This French Infidel, in the same spirit, and to the same end, proceeds, as he vaunts, to prove from Mesmerism, that the soul of man is a material substance. In the English translations of these diabolical books, prepared for circulation among us, such passages are omitted: the time is not yet come for stripping the hideous demon of all his disguises. England is not yet ripe for a professed rejection of God, and an open acknowledgment of Satan, like that which speedily followed upon the reception of Mesmerism in France.

You give us, in your statement, first a marvellous account

*Mark iii. 22—30.

of the cure wrought upon yourself by Mesmeric influences. This I pass over, merely observing, that what man by deep research and practised skill can do, it would be strange indeed if the supernaturally gifted author of Mesmerism, a fallen angel, could not easily accomplish.* I wish now to enter upon the case of "J." an uneducated young girl of fourteen, five years resident in the house with you, to whose simply honest and artless character you bear strong witness, and who became the second subject of these Mesmeric manifestations in your household. She was first treated for a pain in the face, and this led to your making her the object of daily, or rather nightly experiments, the result of which you detail. Now of this girl I do not hesitate to say, that she is, at those times, "possessed by a spirit of divination," as was the damsel who followed the apostles; and the character of the possessing spirit must be gathered from some brief, but very startling notices of what occasionally transpired.

Of these I select three. First, the girl was enabled accurately, minutely, to describe an event that *had* occurred at sea, but the particulars of which could not yet have reached her. This she saw as in a vision. Who doubts that she might have seen it all, within an almost unspeakably short space of its occurrence, by "the Prince of the power of the air?" He of course moves with the swiftness of spirit unincumbered with matter, and he, or any of his subordinate angels, could have set before the mental eye of the possessed person what he had just witnessed. Cases of this kind are authenticated beyond a reasonable cavil, in the history of the Delphic and other oracles among the Pagans of old, and upon such hypothesis, the thing is at once explained: upon any other, unless a revelation from above, it is, if not a cheat, utterly inexplicable. I am ready to admit, that so far as the simple phenomenon is concerned, of alleviating bodily pain, and of so lulling into repose the nervous system as to induce a torpid state, there may be nothing supernatural. Influences, not yet fully discovered by the investigations of philosophy, may exist, and be communicable from one individual to another,

[* The medical gentleman who attended Miss M. has proved to the satisfaction of all the profession that Mesmerism had nothing to do with the cure of Miss M.]

operating, perhaps, by electricity, to an extent hitherto unsuspected. The marvellous conformation, the surprising power, acting by deliberate volition, in the electric eel, confirm this theory; but I beseech you to mark the limit of my admission; it is strictly confined within the boundaries of physical and mental operation. When your somnambules describe events occurring at a distance; when they reveal the seat, and the nature, and probable termination of diseases impenetrable by mortal skill; when the uneducated and uninformed express themselves with elegance and perspicuity, in terms the signification of which they are still ignorant of in their natural waking state; and above all, when they prove, as invariably they do, that mind and memory present a perfect blank with regard to the transactions of their entranced hours; then, madam, I tell you without hesitation, that the body which you have thrown into such torpor, becomes the helpless, passive, unconscious, polluted receptacle of an evil spirit, who uses the organs of speech and motion in that wretched individual for the manifestation of his own craft, and subtlety, and superhuman powers.

In proof of this, i. e. that the spirit so acting is the rebellious spirit of all evil, I proceed to transcribe two passages, one from your first, the other from your second communication, concerning this poor girl. I beseech you to note them well, with their inevitable inferences, as bearing upon revelation and faith; for I would fain hope that you are not knowingly spreading among your countrymen and countrywomen the worst venom of asps, the very poison of hell.

First—and I give the statement entire—you say,

"It is almost an established opinion among some of the wisest students of Mesmerism, that the mind of the somnambule mirrors that of the Mesmerist. Of course this explains nothing of the operation of Mesmerism, but it is a supposition most important to be established or disproved. One naturally wishes to find it true, as it disposes of much that, with the hasty, passes for revelation of other unseen things than those which lie in another person's mind. It certainly is true to a considerable extent, as is pretty clearly proved when an ignorant child, ignorant especially of the Bible, discourses of the Scriptures and divinity when mesmerized by a clergyman, and of the nebulæ when mesmerized by an

astronomer; but we have evidence in 'J.' that this is, though often, not universally true. I will give an example of each.

"On Saturday, October 12, she had told us that she now 'saw the shades of things' that she wanted to know, and that she should 'soon see clearer.' The next evening she went into a great rapture about the 'gleams' becoming brighter, so that she should soon see all she wished. The light came through the brain—not like sunlight, nor moonlight; 'no, there is no light on earth like this:' the knowledge she got 'comes astonishingly, amazingly, so pleasantly!' 'How is the Mesmerizing done which causes this?' 'By all the powers at once.' 'What powers?' 'The soul, and the mind, and the vital powers of the body.' Then, as we inquired, 'The mind is not the same as the soul. All are required in Mesmerizing, but the mind most, though Mesmerism is still something else.' 'Those three things exist in every human being (the soul, the mind, and the body) separate from one another, but the faculties belonging to them are not the same in every body; some have more, some less. The body dies, and the mind dies with it, but the soul lives after it. The soul is independent and self-existent, and therefore lives for ever. It depends upon nothing.'

"Here I prompted the question, 'What then is its relation to God?' She hastily replied, 'He takes care of it, to reunite it with the body in the day of judgment.' *Here I was forcibly and painfully struck with the incompatibility of the former and latter saying*, not (as I hope it is needless to explain) for any waiting on her lips for revelations on this class of subjects, but because *it was painful to find her faculties working* FAULTILY. As I felt this disappointment come over me, an expression of trouble disturbed J.'s face, so ineffably happy always during her sleep. 'Stop,' said she, 'I am not sure about that last. All I said was true—the real *Mesmeric* truth. But I cannot make out about that last. I heard it when I was awake—I heard it in church—that all the particles of our body, however they may be scattered, will be gathered together at the day of judgment; but I am not sure.' And she became excited, saying that 'it bothered her,' what she knew and what she had heard being mixed up. Her Mesmerist dispersed that set of ideas, and

she was presently happy again, talking of 'the lights.' This was the occasion on which some traces remained in her waking state, and she told a fellow-servant that she had been dreaming and talking about the day of judgment.

"Now here her mind seemed to reflect those of both her companions (though I was not aware of being *en rapport* with her.) Her Mesmerist had it in her mind that a somnambule at Cheltenham had declared man to consist of three elements; and J.'s trouble at her own mingling of ideas from two sources, seems to have been an immediate echo of mine. Such an incident as this shows how watchful the reason should be over such phenomena, and explains the rise of many pretensions to inspiration. It requires some self-control for the most philosophical to look on a person of moderate abilities and confined education, in the attitude of sleep, and unaware of passing incidents, but speaking on high subjects with animated delight, exceeding any thing witnessed in ordinary life; it requires some coolness and command of self to remember, that what is said may be of no authority as truth, however valuable as manifestation."

I have given the passage entire, Madam, without omission or interpolation, merely marking with italics that on which I desire to fix the attention of every person who reads these pages. It seems to me, that the spirit whom you had summoned to this nocturnal conference, being startled and agitated by the sudden introduction of the name of God, "hastily," as you express it, uttered a known truth, and because for once the devil spoke truth, you would not believe him. Can it be that you deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the body? I am utterly at a loss to comprehend you here. Do you doubt that "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible?"* Do you forget that "THIS CORRUPTIBLE must put on incorruption; and THIS MORTAL must put on immortality." Your gifted instructor, the sleeping servant girl, most truly tells you that the soul lives after the body's death —lives for ever; to this you do not object, but when, in the next breath she tells you that God will, at the last day, reunite the soul to its risen body, you are troubled, you are pained, you conceive that her faculties are working *faultily;*

* 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53.

and the evil spirit loses his self-possesion too, for *he* "believes and trembles."* He dreads what you may next say, for there is an inseparable connexion between "Jesus and the resurrection;"† and a flash of heavenly glory threatens to invade, to extinguish in deepest darkness the "gleams" from beneath that dance about your poor abused victim. Nay, Jesus is the resurrection and the life;‡ and had not your Mesmerizing companion "dispersed that set of ideas;" or, in plainer words, ceased to terrify the evil spirit, some "manifestation" might have followed that would have shaken your nerves beyond the soothing powers of any operator.

I confess that what I have now quoted confirmed me beyond the admission of any reasonable doubt, both as to the reality and the nature of these manifestations. The awkward attempts of the spirit to neutralize the truth inadvertently or compulsorily uttered; the troubled, half-aroused state of the poor somnambule; the observation that she was incited to make on the following day to a fellow menial, and which was duly reported to you, together with your own very unphilosophical and inconsistent endeavour to reconcile contradictions; and far worse, the sly, subtle, yet palpable hit that you aim at all real inspiration, by means of this remarkable interruption of your proceedings, all will, I humbly hope, be laid to heart by such as fear to transgress, and prove that He, whose great and terrible name was lightly introduced, is overruling the excess of evil to the production of some good.

I am come to another instance of what I must call the truly devilish tendency of the work; an onward step in the career where I pray God you may have grace given you to pause and turn. Remember, I am taking it for granted that your veracity is unimpeachable. I believe what you state to be exactly what you have experienced, and seen, and heard. If deception exist any where, it proceeds, of course, in the first instance, from the father of lies; but this appears to be a deeper work, fulfilling our Lord's prediction of those who should arise, and "show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."§

* James ii. 19.
† Acts xvii. 18.
‡ John xi. 25.
§ Mark xiii. 22.

Again, I allow you to speak for yourself; and again I demand close attention to what follows:

"One singular instance of *rapport* between J. and her Mesmerist, I have witnessed under such unexceptionable circumstances as to be absolutely sure of it. When J. was dancing, and taking this room for a ball-room, she took her Mesmerist for her partner, allowed herself to be conducted to a seat, &c. assuming a ball-room air, which was amusing enough in one with her eyes sealed up as motionless as if they were never again to open. Being offered refreshment, she chose some mesmerized water, a glass of which was on the table, prepared for me. It seemed to exhilarate her, and she expressed great relish of the 'refreshment.' It struck us that we would try, another evening, whether her Mesmerist's will could affect her sense of taste. In her absence we agreed that the water should be silently willed to be sherry the next night. To make the experiment as clear as possible, the water was first offered to her, and a little of it drunk as water. Then the rest was, while still in her hands, silently willed to be sherry; she drank it off—half a tumbler full—declared it was very good; but presently, that it made her tipsy. What was it? 'Wine—white wine.' And she became exceedingly merry and voluble, but refused to rise from her chair, or dance any more, or go down stairs, for she could not walk steadily, and should fall and spoil her face, and moreover, frighten them all below. I afterwards asked her Mesmerist to let it be porter the next night. J. knew nothing of porter, it seems, but called her refreshment a 'nasty sort of beer.'"

Here I pause: the Lord has said, "It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him by whom they come!"* Are you, madam, prepared to encounter the "woe" annexed to the placing of such an "offence," such a stumbling-block as this, in the way of weak believers, and of giving to the enemies of the gospel so fearful an occasion to blaspheme? Whether you are conscious of it or not, this last incident was devised by Satan to pour contempt, or to throw a soul-destroying doubt on the miracle of Cana in Galilee.† You, or your companion in these perilous doings,

* Luke xvii. 1. † John ii.

acted upon a suggestion of the Evil One, to *will* a glass of water into wine; and though no change took place perceptible to any mortal sense, the same presiding spirit had power over the possessed girl to imitate in her the effects of an intoxicating draught; and by her mouth he told you that what he had tempted you to will was actually accomplished. When I read this passage, horror itself gave way to the burning indignation of my soul at so infernal a travesty on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; branding at once your familiar spirit as one of the *false* Christs, whose aim it is to try to deceive the very elect. Perhaps this did not even occur to you; perhaps in the infinite and unsearchable mercy of him whom you thus wrong, it may be made the means of opening your eyes to the real character of what you are engaged in. I perceive that the devil apprehended the rousing of some Christian to an open protest against such covert blasphemies, and told you the tale of an old woman making cataplasms for a monk's feet two centuries since, with the reward of her benevolence; and encouraged you by contrasting the liberality of these days with the bigotry of former times, adroitly insinuating that witchcraft is not now amenable to the law of the land; or at least, that nobody would revive the operation of such cruel, and in one sense, truly absurd statutes: but remember, there is a law eternal, immutable, and which can by no means be evaded —a law that will try us all when that hour comes of which the Scripture speaks, when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and not one soul shall escape the condemnation that we all have incurred, excepting those whose names are found written in the Book of Life.*

The one object of Christ's first coming into this world was to destroy the works of the devil;† and the one object of Satan is to mar, and, so far as he can, to defeat the work of Christ. It is impossible to read your statement of what has befallen those of your own household without being struck with its manifest tendency, apart from all the foreign theories that openly blaspheme the Lord, to undermine the first principles of the Christian faith. Whether the facts be as you believe them

* Rev. xx. 12, 15.

† 1 John iii. 8.

to be, or whether all may at last turn out but a cunning deception practised upon you, still wherever your statement is received as true, the effect is equally pernicious; and therefore, if it be a lie, it is no common lie, but one that perils the salvation of such as believe it. I am aware that gross deceptions of this kind are practised, and from time to time publicly exposed, rendering the whole craft a matter of ridicule to many; but this also serves to throw the unwary off their guard, and where they go to laugh, they may remain to doubt, to disbelieve the gospel, and to perish. O that I could impress your mind with the thrilling reality of your present danger! Deceiving, deceived, or possessed, surely presents a very awful alternative. You do not appear to have gone so far as others into these depths, and your way of escape is more open. I ask of you to bow the knee in believing prayer to Him before whom every knee must and shall finally bow, even Jesus, "who through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil;"* Jesus, who "hath ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and received gifts for men, *even for the rebellious;*"† Jesus, to whom "all power is given, both in heaven and on earth," and who will yet appear in great glory to sit on a throne of judgment before which both you and I must stand.‡ I beseech you to ask of him power to free yourself from every snare, and grace to help in this day of need; the greater need because you seem unconscious of it. Do not reject my words; they are those of truth and soberness, and I have no motive in writing them but the earnest desire that I feel to warn my fellow-Christians of the nets spread for their feet; and this I have done by submitting to their investigation two or three fragments of those nets, in extracts from your published statements. Believing, as I do, the existence of diabolical arts at this day in Egypt, in India, and other lands of darkness, and seeing what was the birth-place, who were the promulgators of this Mesmeric delusion, I cannot but raise even my feeble hand to resist its spread in my own country; more especially when the hand of another female is employed to scatter it far and wide.

* Heb. ii. 14.

† Psalm lxviii. 18.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.

I request your pardon, if in any instance, I have appeared personally uncourteous: the cause of my glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, is very dear to my soul, and I cannot but be grieved with those who rise up against him. To him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords;* to him whom the angels of God worship,† while the whole power of hell lies prostrate at his feet,‡ be glory and dominion, honour and majesty, now and for ever. May you be enabled to say, Amen!

I am, MADAM,

One who would gladly serve you,

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH TONNA.

BLACKHEATH, *December* 10, 1844.

* Rev. xix. 16. † Heb. i. 6. ‡ Col. ii. 15.